Amendments to Claims:

1 (Previously Presented). A method comprising :
     (a)   providing a database of rules;
     (b)   applying an algorithm to the database to identify Almost-Exact Rules and Other Rules;
     (c)   partitioning the database so that the Almost-Exact Rules are grouped into one or more groups;
     (d)   partitioning the database so that the Other Rules are grouped in at least one separate group.

2 (Previously Presented). The method of Claim 1 further including using a Full Match search algorithm to test packets of data received from a network against the Almost-Exact rules in the one or more groups.

3 (Previously Presented).   The method of claim 1 further including using a Software Managed Tree algorithm to test packets of data received from a network against the Other rules in the separate group.

4 (Previously Presented). The method of claim 1 further including using a Content-Addressable Memory (CAM) to test packets against the other rules in the separate group.

5 (Currently Amended).   The method of claim 1 wherein the database of rules is being partitioned as a function of sub-fields within each ~~rules~~ rule.

6 through 25 Canceled

26 (Previously Presented).   The method of claim 1 wherein each one of the Almost-Exact Rules includes a range of values on only one sub-field.

RAL920000090US1   2

27 (Currently Amended).   The method of claim 1 wherein each one of the Almost-Exact Rules includes a wild card in only one component <u>of the rule</u>.

RAL920000090US1   3